The Fullness of the Priesthood & Holy Order

Study Guide Overview

The idea of degrees of Priesthood is unknown to the average Latter-day Saints (beyond the basic concept of Aaronic and Melchizedek Priesthood). However, the Melchizedek Priesthood itself has different degrees within it, and obtaining the highest of these is essential to exaltation. The Priesthood quorum presiding over those who have received it is higher in authority than and can operate independently of the Church

Please print out this guide, and prayerfully read and ponder over the teachings of the scriptures and the Prophet Joseph Smith on these matters, asking yourself any of the question included here, and noting down any additional questions that arise from your study. (If you have a spouse or young adult children try to study these things with them.)

Study Suggestions

Begin your study with prayer, praying for God to reveal the truth to you through His Spirit.

Pay special attention to the following passages –
(They are included at the end of this guide if you do not have the books)

Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith p. 322-323 & 237.
Alma 13:1-18.
Doctrine & Covenants 76:50-70.

Consider the following questions -

Are there different degrees of the 'Melchizedek' Priesthood?
What is necessary to receive the Fullness of the Priesthood?
What are those called who have received that degree of Priesthood?
What is the organization to which those who have that degree of Priesthood belong?
Are those who preside over this organization higher in authority than the Church?

Find answers within the scriptures & the teachings of Joseph Smith.
(Discussing them with your spouse or a close friend if possible)

Be conscious of the Spirit throughout your studies, and close with prayer.

Make a list of any additional questions you might have, to share with the Seventy who gave you this guide.

Online Resources -

Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith
http://www.boap.org/LDS/Joseph-Smith/Teachings/

The Journals of Discourses
http://journalofdiscourses.org

Note: readings (except scriptural) are included in the Resources section

The Fullness of the Priesthood

Read Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith p. 322-323 & 237.

Look up and read the scriptures and quotes referred to below

Are there different degrees of the 'Melchizedek' Priesthood?

Words of Moroni to Joseph Smith, September 1823 -
D&C 2:1 (JS-H 1:38) "Behold, I will reveal unto you the Priesthood, by the hand of Elijah ..."
(See D&C 110:13-16 for the beginning of the fulfillment of this prophecy)
Revelation to Joseph Smith regarding the Nauvoo Temple -
D&C 124:28 "restore again that which was lost ... even the fulness of the priesthood."
What this restoration entailed -
Joseph Smith: "Now for Elijah. The spirit, power, and calling of Elijah is, that ye have power to hold the key of the revelation, ordinances, oracles, powers and endowments of the fullness of the Melchizedek Priesthood and of the kingdom of God on the earth;" *(History of the Church 6:251)*

What is necessary to receive the Fullness of the Priesthood?

TPJS p. 308 "If a man gets a fullness of the priesthood of God he has to get it ... by keeping all the commandments and obeying all the ordinances of the house of the Lord."

What are those called who have received that degree of Priesthood?

Joseph Smith: "Abraham ... then received a blessing under the hands of Melchizedek, even the last law or a fullness of the law of the priesthood, which constituted him a king and a priests after the order of Melchizedek." *(Words of Joseph Smith, p. 246, James Burgess notebook, 27 August 1843)*
Brigham Young: "If any in the church have the fullness of the Melchizedek Priesthood [I do] not know it. For any person to have the fullness of that priesthood, he must be a king and priest." *(History of the Church 5:527)*
TPJS p. 346 "you have got to learn how to be Gods yourselves, and to be kings and priests to God, the same as all Gods have done before you, ..."

This degree of Priesthood is essential to exaltation

Revelation 5:10 "And hast made us unto our God kings and priests; and we shall reign on the earth."
D&C 76:53 "And who overcome by faith, and are sealed by the Holy Spirit of promise, which the Father sheds forth upon all those who are just and true. [v54] They are they who are the church of the Firstborn. [v55] They are they into whose hands the Father has given all things - [v56] They are they who are priests and kings, who have received of his fulness, and of his glory; [v57] And are priests of the Most High, after the order of Melchizedek, which was after the order of Enoch, which was after the order of the Only Begotten Son. [v58] Wherefore, as it is written, they are gods, even the sons of God -"

It was necessary for this degree of Priesthood to remain – even if the Twelve were killed -

Brigham Young: "I know there are those in our midst who will seek the lives of the Twelve as they did the lives of Joseph and Hyrum. We shall ordain others and give the fullness of the priesthood, so that if we are killed the fullness of the priesthood may remain." *(History of the Church 7:230)*

The Holy Order & Church of the Firstborn

Read Alma 13:1-18.
& Doctrine & Covenants 76:50-70.
Look up and read the scriptures and quotes referred to below

What is the organization to which those who have that degree of Priesthood belong?

In the days of Moses the Holy Order was taken away from the majority of the people -

JST Exodus 34:1 "I will take away the priesthood out of their midst; therefore my holy order, and the ordinances thereof, shall not go before them; ..." *(see JST Gen. 9:23, Heb. 12:23 & D&C 84:23-27)*

This Holy Order existed in the days of the Nephites -

2 Nephi 6:2 "having been called of God, and ordained after the manner of his holy order ..."
Alma 13:8 "they were ordained after this manner -being called with a holy calling, and ordained with a holy ordinance, and taking upon them the high priesthood of the holy order ..." *(see v. 1-18 & 4:20, 5:44,54, 6:8, 7:22, 8:4, 43:2, 49:30)*
Ether 12:10 "Behold it was by faith that they of old were called after the holy order of God."

Those in the holy order (commissioned to do so) bring others into the Church of the Firstborn -

D&C 77:11 "Q. What are we to understand by sealing the one hundred and forty-four thousand,out of all the tribes of Israel -twelve thousand out of every tribe? A. We are to understand that those who are sealed are high priests, ordained unto the holy order of God, to administer the everlasting gospel; for they are they who are ordained out of every nation, kindred, tongue, and people, by the angels to whom is given power over the nations of the earth, to bring as many as will come to the church of the Firstborn."

Membership in the Church of the Firstborn was restored in our day -

TPJS p. 237 "I spent the day ... instructing them in the principles and order of the Priesthood, ... and so on to the highest order of the Melchizedek Priesthood, ... by which any one is enabled to secure the fullness of those blessing which have been prepared for the Church of the Firstborn ... In this council was instituted the ancient order of things for the first time in these last days."
Brigham Young: "The ordinances of the house of God are expressly for the Church of the Firstborn" *(Journal of Discourses 8:154)*

Although Jesus brings men into the Church of the Firstborn, it is the Church of the Father -

Heber C. Kimball "Let me explain what the Church of the Firstborn is. It is the first church that was ever raised upon this earth; that is, the first born church. That is what I mean; and when God our Father organized that Church, He organized it just as His Father organized the Church on the earth where He dwelt." *(Journal of Discourses 5:129)*
Abraham 1:3 "the Firstborn, or the first man, who is Adam, or first father."
Colossians 1:15 "Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature:"
D&C 88:5 "Which glory is that of the church of the Firstborn, even of God, the holiest of all, ..."

Priesthood Authority above the Church

Presiding quorum of those holding the fullness of the Priesthood is a theocracy -

TPJS, p. 322 "What was the power of Melchizedek? 'Twas not the Priesthood of Aaron which administers in outward ordinances, and the offering of sacrifices. Those holding the fullness of the Melchizedek Priesthood are kings and priests of the Most High God, holding the keys of power and blessings. In fact, that priesthood is a perfect law of theocracy, and stands as God to give laws to the people, administering endless lives to the sons and daughters of Adam."

Are those who preside over this organization higher in authority than the Church?

Joseph Smith was ordained to the Highest Priesthood in 1843 -

"Baurak Ale [code name for Joseph Smith] was by common consent, & unanimous voice chosen president of the quorum. & anointed & ord[ained] to the highest and holiest order of the priesthood (& companion)." *(Joseph Smith, Diary, 28 September 1843)*

Joseph Smith: "At half-past eleven, a.m., a council convened over the store, consisting of myself, my brother Hyrum, Uncle John Smith, Newel K. Whitney, George Miller, Willard Richards, John Taylor, Amasa Lyman, John M. Bernhisel, and Lucien Woodworth; and at seven in the evening we met in the front upper room of the Mansion, with William Law and William Marks. By the common consent and unanimous voice of the counsel, I was chosen president of the special council.

The president led in prayer that his days might be prolonged until his mission on the earth is accomplished, have dominion over his enemies, all their households be blessed, and all the Church and the world." *(History of the Church 6:39)*

Joseph wished to resign as Church leader to take higher calling as head of Holy Order -

Joseph Smith: "Said he would not prophesy any more; Hyrum should be the prophet; (did not tell them he was going to be a Priest now, or a King by and by;) ..." *(History of the Church 5:512)*

TPJS p. 318 "July 23, 1843. Last Monday morning, certain men came to me and said, 'Brother Joseph, Hyrum is no Prophet - he can't lead the Church. If you resign, all things will go wrong; you must not resign; if you do, the Church will be scattered.' I felt curious and said, "Have you not learned the Priesthood after the order of Melchizedek, which includes both Prophets, Priests, and Kings? and I will advance your Prophet to a Priest, and then to a King - not to the Kingdoms of this earth, but of the Most High God."

During the trial of Sidney Rigdon some details of a secret higher quorum emerged -

Heber C. Kimball: "There are men here brethren who have got authority, but we don't want to mention their names, for the enemy will try to kill them." *(Trial of Sidney Rigdon, 8 September 1844)*

Heber C. Kimball: "He [Sidney Rigdon] has no authority, only what he receives from the Church. ... He has not got the same authority as others: there are more than thirty men who have got higher authority than he has." *(Times and Seasons 5:663.)*

The twelve likewise told William Smith -

"the President of the Church and each of our Quorum [of Twelve Apostles] are amenable to the Quorum of which you are a member." *(Letter of the Twelve to William Smith, Succession in the Presidency, B.H. Roberts, p. 23.)*

Additional References

Look up and read the scriptures and quotes referred to below

Kings & Priests -

TPJS p. 332 Appoint a leader, and let them beat up for volunteers. I want every man that goes to be a king and a priest. When he gets on the mountains, he may want to talk with his God; when with the savage nations have power to govern, etc.

TPJS p. 339 Although David was a king, he never did obtain the spirit and power of Elijah and the fullness of the Priesthood; ...

Further References to the Church of the Firstborn -

JST Gen 9:23 "And the general assembly of the church of the firstborn shall come down out of heaven ..."

Heb 12:23 "To the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven ..."

D&C 76:67 "These are they who have come to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of Enoch, and of the Firstborn." (see v. 71)

D&C 76:94 "They who dwell in his presence are the church of the Firstborn; ..." (see v. 102)

D&C 78:21 "For ye are the church of the Firstborn, and he will take you up in a cloud, and appoint every man his portion."

D&C 107:19 "To have the privilege of receiving the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, to have the heavens opened unto them, to commune with the general assembly and church of the Firstborn, and to enjoy the communion and presence of God the Father ..."

TPJS 64 "Have you a promise of receiving a crown of righteousness from the hand of the Lord, with the Church of the Firstborn?" (see p. 151)

Considering reading –

The Holy Order in Nauvoo, Lisle G. Brown (LDS Bishop)
- *http://magazine.mormonfundamentalism.org/Holy_Order_Nauvoo.htm*

Readings from Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith

Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith, p. 322-323:

Respecting the Melchizedek Priesthood, the sectarians never professed to have it; consequently they never could save any one, and would all be damned together. There was an Episcopal priest who said he had the priesthood of Aaron, but had not the priesthood of Melchizedek and I bear testimony that I never have found the man who claimed the Priesthood of Melchizedek. The power of the Melchizedek priesthood is to have the power of "endless lives;" for the everlasting covenant cannot be broken.

The law was given under Aaron for the purpose of pouring out judgments and destructions.

The sectarian world are going to hell by hundreds, by thousands and by millions.

There are three grand orders of priesthood referred to here. 1st. The King of Shiloam. (Salem) had power and authority over that of Abraham, holding the key and the power of endless life. Angels desire to look into it, but they have set up too many stakes. God cursed the children of Israel because they would not receive the last law from Moses.

The sacrifice required of Abraham in the offering up of Isaac, shows that if a man would attain to the keys of the kingdom of an endless life; he must sacrifice all things. When God offers a blessing or knowledge to a man, and he refuses to receive it, he will be damned. The Israelites prayed that God would speak to Moses and not to them; in consequence of which he cursed them with a carnal law.

What was the power of Melchizedek? 'Twas not the Priesthood of Aaron which administers in outward ordinances, and the offering of sacrifices. Those holding the fullness of the Melchizedek Priesthood are kings and priests of the Most High God, holding the keys of power and blessings. In fact, that priesthood is a perfect law of theocracy, and stands as God to give laws to the people, administering endless lives to the sons and daughters of Adam.

Abraham says to Melchizedek, I believe all that thou hast taught me concerning the priesthood and the coming of the Son of Man; so Melchizedek ordained Abraham and sent him away. Abraham rejoiced, saying, Now I have a priesthood.

Salvation could not come to the world without the mediation of Jesus Christ.

How shall God come to the rescue of this generation? He will send Elijah the prophet. The law revealed to Moses in Horeb never was revealed to the children of Israel as a nation.

Elijah shall reveal the covenants to seal the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the children to the fathers.

The anointing and sealing is to be called, elected and made sure.

"Without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days nor end of life, but made like unto the Son of God, abideth a priest continually." The Melchizedek Priesthood holds the right from the eternal God, and not by descent from father and mother; and that priesthood is as eternal as God Himself, having neither beginning of days nor end of life.

The 2nd Priesthood is Patriarchal authority. Go to and finish the temple, and God will fill it with power, and you will then receive more knowledge concerning this priesthood.

The 3rd is what is called the Levitical Priesthood, consisting of priests to administer in outward ordinance, made without an oath; but the Priesthood of Melchizedek is by an oath and covenant.

The Holy Ghost is God's messenger to administer in all those priesthoods.

Jesus Christ is the heir of this Kingdom--the only begotten of the Father according to the flesh, and holds the keys over all this world.

Men have to suffer that they may come upon Mount Zion and be exalted above the heavens.

I know a man that has been caught up to the third heavens, and can say, with Paul, that we have seen and heard things that are not lawful to utter.

27 August 1843, History of the Church 5:555-556, Words of Joseph Smith, p. 245-246.

Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith, p. 237:

I spent the day in the upper part of the store, that is in my private office ... in council with General James Adams, of Springfield, Patriarch Hyrum Smith, Bishops Newel K. Whitney and George Miller, and President Brigham Young and Elders Heber C. Kimball and Willard Richards, instructing them in the principles and order of the Priesthood, attending to washings, anointings, endowments and the communication of keys pertaining to the Aaronic Priesthood, and so on to the highest order of the Melchizedek Priesthood, setting forth the order pertaining to the Ancient of Days, and all those plans and principles by which any one is enabled to secure the fullness of those blessing which have been prepared for the Church of the Firstborn, and come up and abide in the presence of the Eloheim in the eternal worlds. In this council was instituted the ancient order of things for the first time in these last days. And the communications I made to this council were of things spiritual, and to be received only by the spiritual minded: and there was nothing made known to these men but what will be made known to all the Saints of the last days, so soon as they are prepared to receive, and a proper place is prepared to communicate them, even to the weakest of the Saints; therefore let the Saints be diligent in building the Temple, and all houses which they have been, or shall hereafter be, commanded of God to build; and wait their time with patience in all meekness, faith, perseverance unto the end, knowing assuredly that all these things referred to in this council are always governed by the principle of revelation.

4 May 1842, History of the Church 5:1-2.

Major Scriptural References

Alma 13:1 And again, my brethren, I would cite your minds forward to the time when the Lord God gave these commandments unto his children; and I would that ye should remember that the Lord God ordained priests, after his holy order, which was after the order of his Son, to teach these things unto the people.

2 And those priests were ordained after the order of his Son, in a manner that thereby the people might know in what manner to look forward to his Son for redemption.

3 And this is the manner after which they were ordained—being called and prepared from the foundation of the world according to the foreknowledge of God, on account of their exceeding faith and good works; in the first place being left to choose good or evil; therefore they having chosen good, and exercising exceedingly great faith, are called with a holy calling, yea, with that holy calling which was prepared with, and according to, a preparatory redemption for such.

4 And thus they have been called to this holy calling on account of their faith, while others would reject the Spirit of God on account of the hardness of their hearts and blindness of their minds, while, if it had not been for this they might have had as great privilege as their brethren.

5 Or in fine, in the first place they were on the same standing with their brethren; thus this holy calling being prepared from the foundation of the world for such as would not harden their hearts, being in and through the atonement of the Only Begotten Son, who was prepared—

6 And thus being called by this holy calling, and ordained unto the high priesthood of the holy order of God, to teach his commandments unto the children of men, that they also might enter into his rest—

7 This high priesthood being after the order of his Son, which order was from the foundation of the world; or in other words, being without beginning of days or end of years, being prepared from eternity to all eternity, according to his foreknowledge of all things—

8 Now they were ordained after this manner—being called with a holy calling, and ordained with a holy ordinance, and taking upon them the high priesthood of the holy order, which calling, and ordinance, and high priesthood, is without beginning or end—

9 Thus they become high priests forever, after the order of the Son, the Only Begotten of the Father, who is without beginning of days or end of years, who is full of grace, equity, and truth. And thus it is. Amen.

10 Now, as I said concerning the holy order, or this high priesthood, there were many who were ordained and became high priests of God; and it was on account of their exceeding faith and repentance, and their righteousness before God, they choosing to repent and work righteousness rather than to perish;

11 Therefore they were called after this holy order, and were sanctified, and their garments were washed white through the blood of the Lamb.

12 Now they, after being sanctified by the Holy Ghost, having their garments made white, being pure and spotless before God, could not look upon sin save it were with abhorrence; and there were many, exceedingly great many, who were made pure and entered into the rest of the Lord their God.

13 And now, my brethren, I would that ye should humble yourselves before God, and bring forth fruit meet for repentance, that ye may also enter into that rest.

14 Yea, humble yourselves even as the people in the days of Melchizedek, who was also a high priest after this same order which I have spoken, who also took upon him the high priesthood forever.

15 And it was this same Melchizedek to whom Abraham paid tithes; yea, even our father Abraham paid tithes of one-tenth part of all he possessed.

16 Now these ordinances were given after this manner, that thereby the people might look forward on the Son of God, it being a type of his order, or it being his order, and this that they might look forward to him for a remission of their sins, that they might enter into the rest of the Lord.

17 Now this Melchizedek was a king over the land of Salem; and his people had waxed strong in iniquity and abomination; yea, they had all gone astray; they were full of all manner of wickedness;

18 But Melchizedek having exercised mighty faith, and received the office of the high priesthood according to the holy order of God, did preach repentance unto his people. And behold, they did repent; and Melchizedek did establish peace in the land in his days; therefore he was called the prince of peace, for he was the king of Salem; and he did reign under his father.

D&C 76:50 And again we bear record—for we saw and heard, and this is the testimony of the gospel of Christ concerning them who shall come forth in the resurrection of the just—

51 They are they who received the testimony of Jesus, and believed on his name and were baptized after the manner of his burial, being buried in the water in his name, and this according to the commandment which he has given—

52 That by keeping the commandments they might be washed and cleansed from all their sins, and receive the Holy Spirit by the laying on of the hands of him who is ordained and sealed unto this power;

53 And who overcome by faith, and are sealed by the Holy Spirit of promise, which the Father sheds forth upon all those who are just and true.

54 They are they who are the church of the Firstborn.

55 They are they into whose hands the Father has given all things—

56 They are they who are priests and kings, who have received of his fulness, and of his glory;

57 And are priests of the Most High, after the order of Melchizedek, which was after the order of Enoch, which was after the order of the Only Begotten Son.

58 Wherefore, as it is written, they are gods, even the sons of God—

59 Wherefore, all things are theirs, whether life or death, or things present, or things to come, all are theirs and they are Christ's, and Christ is God's.

60 And they shall overcome all things.

61 Wherefore, let no man glory in man, but rather let him glory in God, who shall subdue all enemies under his feet.

62 These shall dwell in the presence of God and his Christ forever and ever.

63 These are they whom he shall bring with him, when he shall come in the clouds of heaven to reign on the earth over his people.

64 These are they who shall have part in the first resurrection.

65 These are they who shall come forth in the resurrection of the just.

66 These are they who are come unto Mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly place, the holiest of all.

67 These are they who have come to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of Enoch, and of the Firstborn.

68 These are they whose names are written in heaven, where God and Christ are the judge of all.

69 These are they who are just men made perfect through Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, who wrought out this perfect atonement through the shedding of his own blood.

70 These are they whose bodies are celestial, whose glory is that of the sun, even the glory of God, the highest of all, whose glory the sun of the firmament is written of as being typical.